IN SPAIN'S ANCIENT CITIES.

By William Jennings Bryan.

Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 10, 1906.—The peninsula which Spain and Portugal divide between them is the part of western Europe least visited by Americans, although it stretches out like a friendly hand toward the western hemisphere and has furnished not only the discoverer of North America, but the colonizers of Central and South America. When early last June we attempted to secure homeward passage, we found the ships sailing from Hamburg, Bremen and Antwerp already filled, and had to look to a Mediterranean boat for accommodation. I mention this experience in the hope that it may help some other traveler who finds himself in the same dilemma, for we not only secured satisfactory accommodations on one of the North German Lloyd steamers, the Princess Irene, but had in addition an opportunity to see the most backward country in western Europe, the stronghold of the Moors during the middle ages and one of the great fortresses of the globe.

A fast train makes the distance from Paris to Madrid in a little over a day, the only drawback being that it passes through the Pyrenees in the night. As we remained in Paris longer than we expected we were deprived of a view of the mountain scenery and of the summer resorts of northern Spain. Morning found us in the very heart of Castile and the landscape resembles some parts of Mexico. The country is in the midst of the dry season, and, the grain having been gathered, the fields look quite barren, save for the vineyards. These are numerous all over Spain, and recall the fact that Spain, like other colonizers, tried to make her colonies supplement her own products rather than compete with them. She forbade grape growing in Cuba, and in Mexico not only prohibited the culture of the vine, but the production of silk also. Speaking of grapes, it is only fair to say that in this fruit Spain cannot be surpassed. Nowhere have we found grapes so abundant, so cheap or so delicious. At a Vienna hotel last June they were asking $3 for a cluster—probably raised in a hot house—that in August could be bought in Spain for 10 or 15 cents. The large white grapes exported to the United States and sold as a luxury during the winter months are here within the reach of all.

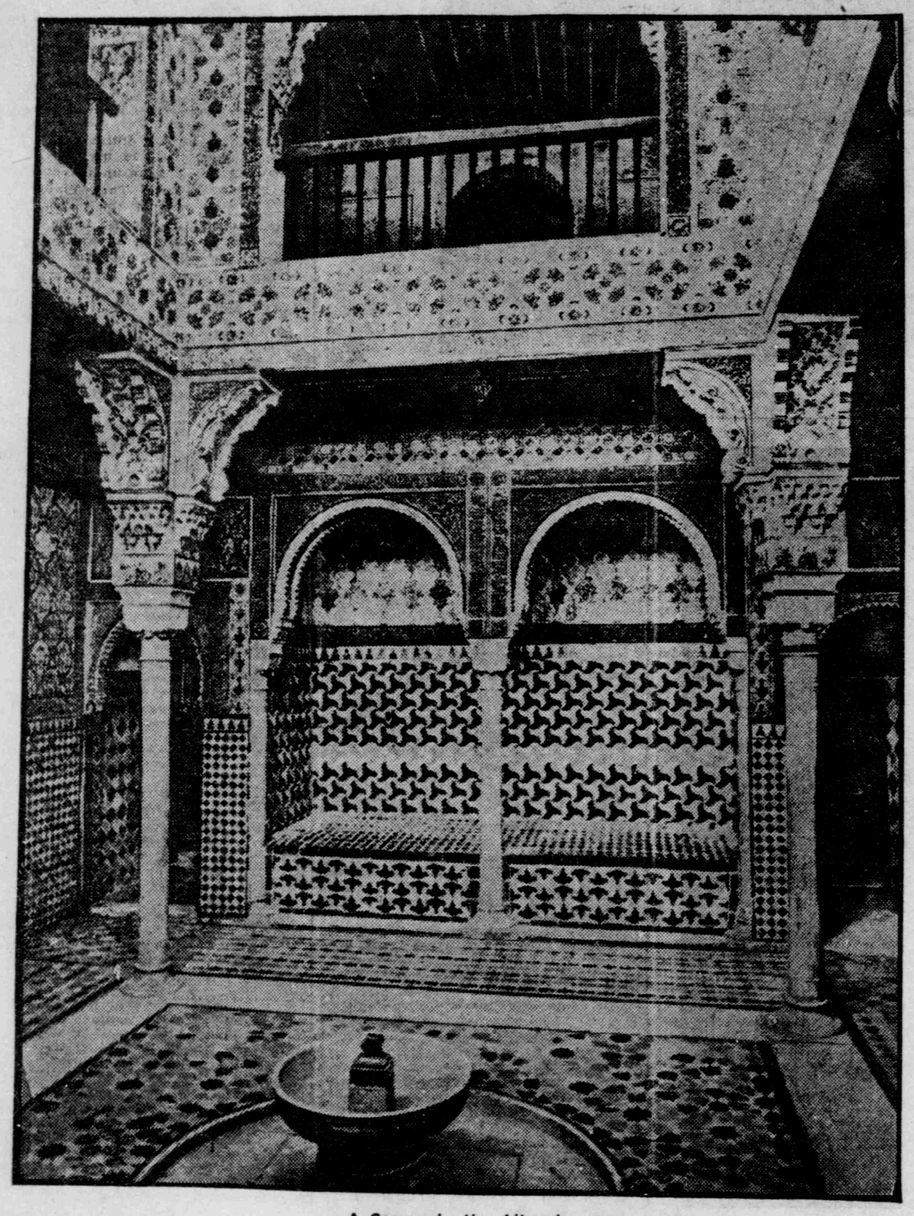
All along the railroad one sees primitive agricultural methods. The old-fashioned threshing floor is in common use, but instead of the flail they employ a machine resembling a light disc harrow, which is hitched to a pair of mules and drawn rapidly round and round. When the wheat is separated from the straw men go over the threshing floor and winnow out the wheat, the wind blowing away the chaff. We were informed that they had had a prosperous year in the grain districts, but the stubble did not indicate as heavy a crop as we raise in the United States.

Madrid surprised us. It contains more than half a million inhabitants, is about 2,000 feet above the sea, and is really a very attractive city. It is not an ancient city, being less than a thousand years old, but it has substantial blocks, a beautiful boulevard and a picture gallery one and a half centuries old. In the different galleries at Madrid are some of the best canvases of Velasquez and Murillo.

As in all other Spanish countries, one finds here reminders of the national sport, the bull fight. Each city has its amphitheatre or circular bull pit, and it is often the most conspicuous building in the place; the fans—and in Spain the fan is omnipresent and often of great value—are ornamented with scenes from the bull fight and the billboards blaze with announcements of the next Sunday's combat. The bull fight is probably a lineal descendant of the gladiatorial contests of Rome, a surviving relic of brutality which must disappear when Spain follows her northern neighbors in the adoption of universal education. At present her percentage of illiteracy is disgracefully large.

While Spain has a constitutional government and goes through the form of electing a legislative body, her elections do not seem to be characterized by the freedom and fairness that attend elections in northern Europe. There is, however, in this country, as in others, a growing spirit of reform which is already demanding more schools and less religious interference in the government. Much is expected of the present kind, both because of the independence which he has manifested and because the new queen comes from England, where parliamentary government has for centuries been an established fact.

Before leaving Madrid a word should be said in regard to the Toledo ware—iron and steel inlaid with gold. It resembles somewhat the Damascene work of Japan and the old inlaid work of Damascus and Constantinople. The far-famed Toledo blade was not less dangerous in war because it was ornamented with delicate tracery of gold.



A Corner In the Alhambra.

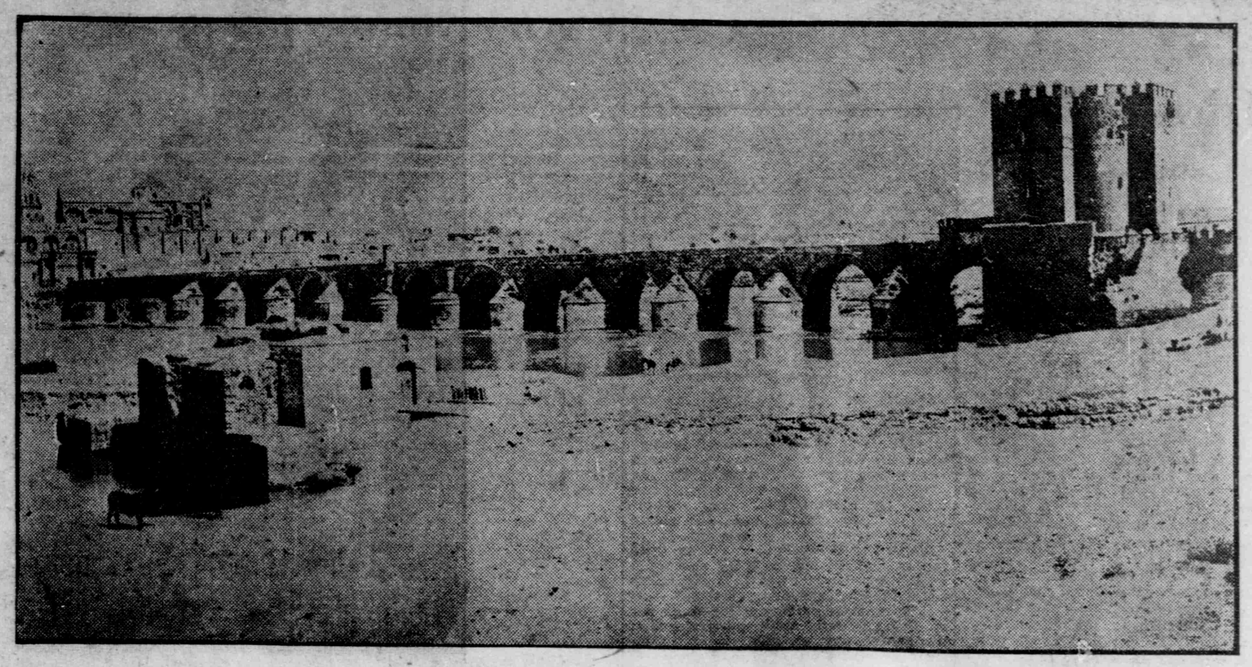
A night's ride brought us to Cordova, once the Moorish capital of Spain. It had been a city of some note under the Romans before the Christian era, and the Moors undertook to make it a western Mecca for the Mohammedans. There are still to be seen two gates and a wall which were built by the Romans and a bridge which rests upon the foundations laid by the great builders. The bridge, with its massive arches and ponderous piers, is interesting for other than historic reasons, as it gives evidence of the fact that the Moors were quick to appreciate and to follow the example of their predecessors. In the stream near the bridge are three grist mills dating from the middle ages, one of which still supplies flour to the neighborhood.

The old mosque, however, is the overshadowing object of interest in Cordova, and in itself well repays a visit to this city of narrow, winding streets and oriental appearance. The ground plan of the mosque covers about 240,000 square feet—nearly as much as St. Peters, at Rome, but one-third of the space is occupied by a court. All well-regulated mosques have a court where the worshipers assemble and purify themselves before entering upon their devotions. The mosque was some four centuries in building, one ruler after another extending its limits in order to accommodate the increasing number of converts. In appearance the structure is low and flat and gives little idea of its immensity. It is surrounded by a strong wall heavily buttressed and is entered by huge gates. One of these gates bears striking testimony to a remarkable agreement entered into by the Christians and Mohammedans whereby the two antogonistic religions divided the church between them. These gates are covered with plates of bronze on which Catholic and Arabic symbols alternate. The joint occupation did not last very long, but Abderrahman when he desired to secure more room for the followers of the Prophet was considerate enough to purchase the other half from the Christians.

The interior of the mosque is a succession of arches supported by nearly a thousand pillars and these pillars, the traveler is told, were brought from Carthage, France and Italy. Workmen were secured in Constantinople by one of the caliphs and it is possible to find almost every variety of architecture in the columns themselves or in their capitals and bases.

When Cordova was recaptured by the Christians in the thirteenth century a part of this building was converted into a cathedral and today it presents a curious combination of chapel, altar, shrine and mosque. The most attractive decorations in the mosque are the mosaics, and the superb wood carvings in the principal choir are of rare merit. One series of these pictures in wood illustrate Old Testament history, while another portrays the principal events in the life of Christ.

The road from Cordova—Cordova, once the center of art, Arabic learning and religion, but now a prosaic town of less than 60,000—to Granada, the last stronghold of the Moors north of the Mediterranean, leads through a succession of olive groves. Nowhere, not even in Palestine or about the mount that bears the olive's name, have we seen such an abundance of these trees. From the importance of this industry one would suppose that southern Europe could supply olive oil enough without importing cotton seed from the United States, and yet we have been assured by shippers that a great deal of the olive oil which we buy from Europe is really cotton seed oil which has twice crossed the Atlantic.



The Old Bridge at Cordova.

The city of Granada is situated at the foot of the Sierra Nevada upon whose summit some snow still lingered when two-thirds of the month of August had passed. The city stretches back toward the mountains and derives its food supply from a splendid valley which extends toward the west to the Atlantic. At one time Granada had a population of 250,000, but today less than a third of that number can be counted in the city. In the height of its glory Granada's kings held court in oriental fashion and surrounded themselves with a luxury which the colder countries of the north did not attempt to imitate. When the Indians roamed over the prairies and hunted through the forests of the western hemisphere, the Arab ruler had his palace on the height of Alhambra, and turning his face toward Mecca prayed for the extermination of the infidel; his warriors went out from the fortress to ravage the surrounding country and, returning laden with spoil, held high carnival on the banks of the Darro. The fairest of the women of his race were gathered into the harem and flowers and fountains gave a perfume and freshness to his habitation.

Washington Irving has contributed so much to literature on the Alhambra and its legends that it is not necessary to undertake a description of this fascinating palace of the Moorish kings. It crowns a hill much as the Parthenon crowns the Acropolis or as the summer residence of Mexico's president crowns Chapultepec. Irving found the palace neglected and occupied by wandering families, whose members felt no interest in its preservation. He helped to arouse an interest in the place which has led the government not only to protect it from further vandalism, but to restore many of its parts. Its rooms, hall, audience chambers, courts and baths are all finished in most elaborate style. As in other Mohammedan buildings, the ornamentation is in geometrical figures and flowers, as the followers of this religion carry their aversion to idolatry so far that they do not use human figures or even figures of animals in decoration. The material employed in the Alhambra is stucco and it is surprising what delicacy and grace characterize the works. One finds here a reminder of the screens which play so important a part in the tombs built by the Mohammedan conquerors in India, except that in India marble is used.

To the American the room known as the hall of the ambassadors is especially interesting because in this room, if the word of the guide can be relied upon, Ferdinand and Isabelle received Columbus just before he embarked upon his voyage of discovery.

A part of the Alhambra was torn down by order of Charles the Fifth, who early in the sixteenth century conceived the idea of building himself a palace of modern design. The structure was never finished, however, and stands today a ruin, more substantial but less beautiful than the palace which it was intended to outshine. The Moors built a great cistern within the outer walls of Alhambra and brought water from the mountains to supply it. It is so far below the surface that the water is always cool and the water is so perfectly filtered that even now it is greatly sought for drinking. This far-sighted provision not only for presents wants but for possible siege seems to have been characteristic of the Moors, for the city of Constantinople was likewise protected by immense underground reservoirs.

Granada has a considerable gypsy population. From the Alhambra one can see their dwellings on an opposite hillside. The rooms are hewn out of the stone, with only the door visible. All in all, Granada offers as much of variety as one can find anywhere in Europe, and more glimpses of the oriental life of the past than can be seen anywhere else west of the Bosphorus.

The rock of Gibraltar has no advertising matter on it. In this respect only does it differ from the photographs with which every reader is familiar. It is, however, larger than the pictures indicate. It is an immense limestone formations, rising abruptly from the water to a height of 1,400 feet. It is about three miles long, and, at the widest point, three-quarters of a mile across. It is evident that it was once an island, for the low, flat strip of ground which connects it with the mainland seems to have been formed by the washing in of the sand. The triangular face of the rock which is usually photographed looks toward the land instead of toward the sea, the water front being much less imposing. A town of 26,000 inhabitants has grown up around the base of the rock, fully 20 per cent of the population being made up of the English garrison. It is strictly a military town and the government does not encourage the settlement of civilians there. The rock is full of concealed cannon and is supposed to be impregnable. It seems to be perforated with galleries and one sees the nose of a cannon poked out at every commanding point. When the wind is from the east, a cloud hovers over the rock, sometimes concealing its summit. While the harbor at Gibraltar is not an especially good one, it is one of the most frequented in the world, and the dry docks will accommodate the largest ships. Just beyond the rock of Gibraltar there is a strip of neutral ground, one side sentinelled by the British, the other by the Spanish. Several thousand Spaniards enter the city every morning, for all the manual labor is done by them, and return to their homes at night. Just across the bay or harbor is the Spanish city of Algeciras, and from both Algeciras and Gibraltar boats cross the strait to Tangier, the Morocco capital.

We had planned to make this trip, but were deterred partly because a revolution in Tangier made it uncertain that we would be able to land, and partly because unfavorable weather threatened to delay our return.

I found at Gibraltar an instance of hereditary office-holding which is not often paralleled among our people. The position of American consul has been in one family for eighty-four years consecutively. The present occupant, Mr. Sprague, is the third of his line to represent our government, his father, who held the office for over fifty years, in turn succeeding his father. The present consul, Sprague III., is intensely American, notwithstanding the long residence of his family outside the country.

As the traveler leaves Gibraltar for the west he bids farewell to Africa and to Europe at the same time—Gibraltar and a somewhat similar rock on the opposite side of the channel, the two anciently known as the Pillars of Hercules, stand out in bold relief against the sky. These rocks are not the last land, however, although the most striking features. There is a point a few miles farther west known as Tarifa, which, according to tradition, was once occupied by bold robbers, who exacted tribute from all who passed by. It is even said that our word tariff traces its origin to this Tarifa; if it be true that the two words are related, it is fitting that Tarifa should be the last thing seen by the traveler on his departure, for the tariff is the first thing which he encounters upon his arrival in America.